

BOOK REVIEWS

A Pictorial View of the Last Century at Wethered's

By Ray Evans

Burnley: Hudson and Pearson

2011, Pp. 240, £18.95

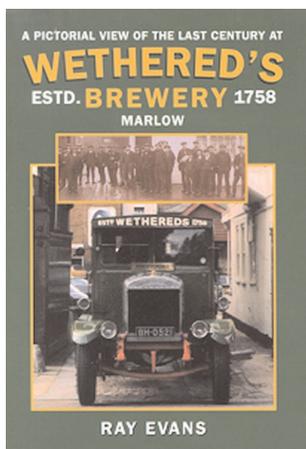
ISBN 978 0 9554017 6 3

This is a very personal story by the author. He joined the brewery at 16 after moving down from Burnley. Despite the fact that he served in other Whitbread breweries, it is clear from this book that he loved his time at Wethereds the most. Whilst not a text book or history book, it is very much a tribute to an organisation that seemed like a family to those who worked there.

Whilst there are no chapters as such, each topic that the author wants to cover is given a separate page or pages with the title on the top. This is then illustrated by numerous photographs, some taken as a memento of an event and never design to be seen to a wider audience

and some taken as a formal record of an official occasion.

The captions are clear, comprehensive and informal in their content. I particularly admire the way the author has gone to great lengths to record the places, the people and events in detail.



In fact a great deal of information is recorded in the narratives of the pictures. If only my own photographs were in such an organised fashion!

As the majority of the pages are in colour these images, and certainly the labels and adverts, benefit from this type of reproduction. The photographs cover not only the Board, the Managers and the Senior brewing staff but also the ordinary people who made the brewery run. In fact the author frequently refers to them as 'the family'.

There are also a large number of inside views of the brewery showing a traditional brew house with the associated trades. And of course the many faces of the people who performed them.

Not a traditional layout of a book, but effective nevertheless, making it feel very lavish and warm. Extremely well laid out and easy to read, with high production values.

Thirsty Godmanchester - Pubs Past & Present

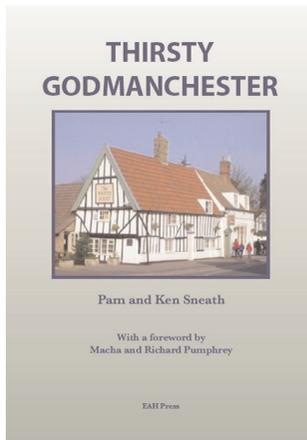
By Pamela Sneath & Kenneth Sneath

Cambridge: E.A.H. Press

2012, Pp. 95, £7.99

ISBN 978 0956038470

This is a book that covers the pubs and taverns of Godmanchester. Not a familiar brewing town but one that nevertheless had a surfeit of excellent ale and public houses. The book covers these, both past and present, in great detail. There are numerous photographs and a few adverts showing the wide diversity of



establishments and gives us an insight into the characters who used them.

Not that there were many pubs in this Huntingdonshire town. A mere 42 in total, but as the authors point out, not all operating concurrently. The book records that of

this total, there are only four in business today. The positions of all 42 are plotted on a useful town map, which allows the authors to document the pubs in a sequence to allow the book to be used as a walking guide. This works extremely well and I felt the need to visit the town just to follow the book's trail.

Many of the photos are of the buildings and the sites as they stand now. As this includes the modern replacements of those that have long since been demolished, the walking guide becomes very useful. However, there are a few old pictures to add atmosphere to the story of a town's drinking past.

The book begins with a summary of the history of beer and how it is produced. Nothing new that I could see but as always a valuable aid to a wider audience. The authors' devote a whole chapter to the Temperance Movement, as this was particularly strong in Godmanchester, unlike some of the other areas of the County.

The production values are high. The text is clear and uncluttered and the photos, whilst relatively small, are clear and easily viewed. The authors provide copious footnote to allow further research and a good bibliography to allow further reading. A detailed index allows quick access to specific topics.

If you are interested in this part of the country then I highly recommend it.

Ghost Taverns of the North East

By Darren W. Ritson & Michael J. Hallowell

Stroud: Amberley Publishing

2012, Pp. 160, £12.99

ISBN 978 1 4456 0753 5

How do you select the pubs you are going to visit? Some of us may look for pubs with interesting architecture, whilst others may seek out good beer and good food. This book offers another way of choosing the pubs to visit if you are in the North East. The two authors have chosen their list of pubs by the tales told by owners and occupants of strange and unexplained goings-on in the bar or the cellar.

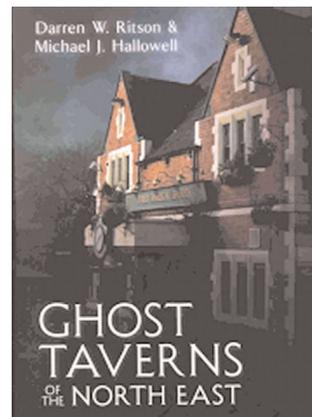
The format of the book is just a list of pubs with no pictures. However, each entry is documented in such a way that it is a mix of historical background, local rumour and gossip and, importantly considering its title, the stories related to the authors of these unexplained events.

The historical elements of the book are brief. A list of pubs in South Shields c.1834 (with no sources as to where this list came from), and one for Jarrow c.1900. The remains of the narrative is given over to those unexplained events. These are graded by the authors and each pub featured given a 'Good Ghost Rating' from 1 to 10. This rating is allocated based on the strength of the 'event' described, whether that is an unexplained noise, smell, presence or feeling.

As the entire book is devoted to words rather than pictures, one might say this is to do with the ethereal nature of the subject.

However, it might have been better for those readers, like me, who are not familiar with the area to at least get a feel for the age and layout of the premises.

Remove the 'Ghost' element of this book and you would be



left with a pub guide but a pub guide with a slant. If you are interested in the unexplained then it is well worth following up on some of the entries and forming your own opinion. If, like me, you believe that there is a rational explanation of all of these 'events' then it is worth using as a pub guide. However, without maps or pictures it falls short of the ideal companion for a visit.

Cheltenham Pubs Through Time

By Geoff Sandles

Stroud: Amberley Publishing

2012, Pp. 96, £14.99

ISBN 978 1 4456 0399 5

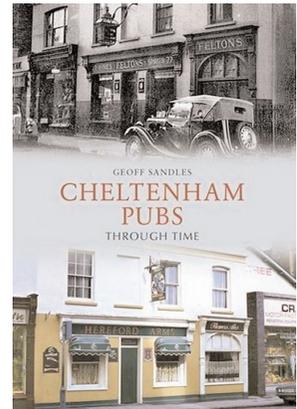
This is another in the regular series of books from Amberley that looks at the pubs of a given area. This book covers the centre and immediate vicinity of Cheltenham. It is produced in colour throughout which allows excellent reproduction of both the modern colour pictures and the black and white historic images used to tell the story.

The format is that the old views of the selected pubs are shown at the top of the page and the more recent view beneath. Sometimes, sadly, this is merely the image of a house or commercial premises. This gives the reader the sense of where the pub stood geographically but more widely reflects the fate of so many of our old

inns. It gives the contemporary reader the opportunity to see what has changed and to appreciate what used to be there. The modern images can be quite shocking as in some locations the new buildings are no match to the architectural beauty of what was removed.

The captions provide a very brief historical background and salient historical facts. The author has an eye for the old brewing companies that traded in the area and where there is a sign available on the building, this is added as a close up.

This is a valuable book than can be used as the basis for a walk around Cheltenham and is also a sampler for further investigations into the pubs and brewers of the town. Ultimately, it is a record of a rapidly diminishing townscape that is all too familiar across the country.



KEN SMITH